



TML Newly Elected City Officials' Orientation

You've got questions...we've got answers.

Speaker Bios July 20-21, 2023 – Round Rock



Bennett Sandlin
Executive Director, Texas Municipal League

Bennett Sandlin is Executive Director of the Texas Municipal League. Prior to being named executive director in 2010, he was General Counsel of the League, where he helped cities primarily in the fields of tax, economic development, budget, and finance issues, including the municipal hotel occupancy tax and the economic development sales tax. Bennett authored the Revenue Manual for Texas Cities and was an instructor in Public Funds Investment Training. Bennett is a 1993 graduate of the University of Texas School of Law and has previously worked at the Municipal Affairs Division of the Texas Attorney General's Office.



Mary J. Kayser
Former City Secretary, City of Fort Worth

Mary was city secretary of Fort Worth since January 2012 and retired on June 30, 2021. She previously served the City of Garland as city secretary from 2006-2012 and served the City of Burleson as deputy city secretary from 1992-1999, and then as city secretary from 1999-2006. Since her retirement in 2021 she has contracted with City Hall Essentials and served as Interim City Secretary in the Towns of Northlake, Westlake and Bartonville as they searched for a permanent Town Secretary. She earned her TRMC Certification in 1999 (No. 325) and recertified four times, most recently in 2019. Mary is an IIMC Certified Municipal Clerk and Master Municipal Clerk and is an Athenian Fellow. She has served as President of NTMCA, TMCA and IIMC.

She continues to be active in TMCA and the North Texas Municipal Clerks Association (NTMCA) as well as IIMC. In May 2023 she was awarded the Quill Award by IIMC. The Quill Award recognizes Municipal Clerks who have distinguished themselves by making a significant and exemplary contribution to their community, their state, principality or province and, in particular, IIMC and their peers.



Amber McKeon-Mueller
Legal Counsel, Texas Municipal League

Amber McKeon-Mueller is Legal Counsel with TML where she provides legal information to city officials, presents on issues relevant to cities, and monitors legislation during the legislative session. She graduated from the University of Texas School of Law and received her undergraduate degree from the University of Nebraska. Prior to joining the TML Legal Department in 2018, she worked for the Texas Attorney General's Office as a litigator. She also litigated for over 6 years in private practice in San Diego, California.



Sarah Tompkins
Legal Counsel, Texas Municipal League

Sarah Tompkins is an attorney in the legal department at Texas Municipal League. Sarah received her undergraduate degree in English Literature from Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi and her law degree from the University of Texas. Prior to joining TML, Sarah served as a legislative attorney at the Texas Legislative Council and a briefing attorney for Judge Elsa Alcalá at the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals.



Dan Johnson

Former City Manager, City of Richardson

Dan Johnson is the recently retired City Manager of Richardson, Texas. During Johnson’s 45 years as a public administrator he served in a variety of capacities in the DFW Metroplex. Dan’s most recent 25 years with the City of Richardson included his 2012 appointment as City Manager, and his prior service as Deputy City Manager for Richardson from 1996. Prior to his move to Richardson in 1996, Johnson served for 11 years in the City of Carrollton, Texas, including three years as City Manager, and eight years as Deputy City Manager. Earlier service included responsibilities as Director of Regional Services for three years at the North Central Texas Council of Governments (D-FW metro area), and he was Budget Officer in Sherman, Texas, for five years.

Dan holds a Bachelors Degree in Political Science from Austin College, and a Masters in Public Administration from the University of North Texas. He is also a graduate of the Public Executive Institute of the LBJ School of Public Affairs. Johnson is the 1995 Distinguished Alumni recipient for the Department of Public Administration at the University of North Texas. He is a Past-President for the Urban Management Assistants of North Texas (UMANT), the North Texas City Management Association (NTCMA), and the Texas City Management Association (TCMA).

In 2022, Dan was named a “Distinguished Member” of the Texas City Management Association - one of only six in the 100-year history of TCMA. He also received the TCMA Lifetime Achievement Award and is the inaugural recipient of TCMA’s Excellence in Ethics and Integrity Award. Dan has received “Life Member” status in both ICMA and TCMA. Dan is the 2021 “Citizen of the Year” award recipient from the Richardson Chamber of Commerce. The North Central Texas Council of Governments presented Dan with the 2022 Bill Pitstick Commitment to Regionalism Award for demonstrated service over his 45-year public administration career. Dan serves on the Methodist Richardson Medical Center Advisory Board, the University of Texas at Dallas Development Board, and the Advisory Council for the UT Dallas School of Economic, Political & Policy Sciences. He is also a Board Member of the University of North Texas Public Administration Advisory Board. He was the Past-Treasurer & Board Executive Committee Member of the North Texas Commission.

Dan and his wife Tina live in Richardson. Dan continues as an active public administration advisor and trainer on topics of municipal service, including Ethics & Governance, Economic Development, Public Finance & Budgets, Transit-Oriented Planning and Development, and Public Management & Leadership, among other topics. Dan and Tina homeschool their miniature schnauzer, Luna!



Stephanie Huser

Legal Counsel, Texas Municipal League

Stephanie Huser is a graduate of St. Mary’s University School of Law and has previously worked as a research attorney at the Texas District and County Attorneys Association. Her experience also includes working for the City of New Braunfels and state agencies such as the Office of the Attorney General and General Land Office.



Brenda N. McDonald

Brenda N. McDonald, PLLC

Brenda McDonald was a founding partner in the North Texas law firm of Messer, Fort & McDonald, PLLC but has recently started her own firm.

She has over 30 years of experience representing both municipalities and private development entities in general municipal matters, land use matters, public/private partnerships, real estate transactions, project financing and economic development incentives. Brenda currently serves as the City Attorney for the towns of Argyle and Sunnyvale and the cities of Ennis, Haslet and Pilot Point. In both public and private practice, Brenda has helped create the public/private partnership framework for numerous large scale development and redevelopment projects in North Texas. Brenda is a co-author of Texas Municipal Zoning Law 3rd ed. published by Lexis Publishing Company.

She is a proud Texas Aggie having received her undergraduate degree in Landscape Architecture and her Master’s degree in Urban Planning, both from Texas A & M University. She received her law degree from the University of Missouri – Kansas City School of Law, J.D, where she studied with renowned land use attorney Robert Freilich.



Monty Wynn

Director, Grassroots and Legislative Services, Texas Municipal League

Monty Wynn is the Director of Grassroots and Legislative Services for the Texas Municipal League where he coordinates and implements the legislative policy program for the 1,175 member cities. He has been with TML for 16 years. Prior to his work at TML, Monty worked for two state comptrollers, was the Committee Director for the House Public Education Committee and served as the Chief of Staff to two Senators. Monty is a graduate of The University of Texas at Austin with a degree in Economics and Political Science. He and his wife, Rosemary, have two sons.



JJ Rocha

Grassroots and Legislative Services Manager, Texas Municipal League

JJ Rocha is the Grassroots and Legislative Services Manager at the Texas Municipal League where she coordinates the legislative policy program for the 1,175 member cities. Before joining TML in 2010, she interned at the Texas House of Representatives. JJ is a graduate from St. Edward's University with a degree in political science. In 2014, she received her Master's from the Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs at the University of Texas in Austin.



Joe Serio

President, Government Leadership Training

Dr. Joe Serio is an international speaker, trainer, and author who holds a Ph.D. in criminal justice from Sam Houston State University (SHSU), with a specialization in leadership and organizational behavior. His career is highlighted by unique experiences in the former Soviet Union investigating the Russian mafia, including a year spent working in the Organized Crime Control Department of the Soviet national police prior to the collapse of the USSR.

He started his own company assisting foreign corporations in Russia and later became a consultant to the New York-based global corporate investigation and business intelligence firm, Kroll Associates. Soon, he became the director of the Moscow office of Kroll, overseeing investigations across the former Soviet Union. While in Russia, he was also a consultant to major U.S. and European media companies and helped produce three documentaries for A&E's *Investigative Reports*. Back in the U.S., Dr. Joe devoted much of his time to finishing his Ph.D. and traveling around the U.S. speaking to corporate audiences on business security issues in Russia. He also served as editor-in-chief of the well-regarded magazine, *Crime and Justice International*, and as co-instructor of week-long programs on developing effective relationships with the media.

Dr. Joe is the author of the critically acclaimed book, *Investigating the Russian Mafia*. He recently released the first two books in his Get the Nerve® Series, *Overcoming Fear: 50 Lessons on Being Bold and Living the Dream* and *Public Speaking: 50 Lessons on Presenting Without Losing Your Cool* with more to follow. He has been interviewed by *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Dallas Morning News*, CNN, NBC News, Fox News, WGN Radio (Chicago), *The European* (UK), *Legal Realm* (China), *Sekai Nippo* (Japan), *Sol de Mexico*, and many other media outlets.



Evelyn Njuguna

Director of Legal Services, Texas Municipal League

Evelyn Njuguna is the Director of Legal Services at TML where she provides legal information to city officials, presents on issues relevant to cities, and monitors legislation during the legislative session. She graduated from the University of Tennessee where she received both her undergraduate and law degrees. Evelyn previously worked at TML in 2006-2008, and recently returned to TML after serving as an Assistant City Attorney at the City of Houston and First Assistant City Attorney at the City of Missouri City.

Workshop Moderators



Tito Rodriguez

TML President-Elect and Mayor Pro Tem, City of North Richland Hills

Tito Rodriguez currently serves as the president-elected of the Texas Municipal League and the mayor pro tem of the City of North Richland Hills. He was first elected to the North Richland Hills City Council in May 2011.

Mayor Pro Tem Rodriguez was raised in San Antonio and graduated from Central Catholic High School. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration from Columbia College in Columbia, Missouri.

He retired from the State of Texas, Office of the Attorney General as a special investigator in the Child Support Enforcement Division in 2015 after a 32-year state career. After his retirement, he took a position with the Birdville Education Foundation as its executive director. He left this position in mid-2017 to dedicate his time with various nonprofits, community, and municipal organizations, including the Texas Municipal League, the National League of Cities, the North Central Texas Council of Governments, the Trinity Metro, and the United Way of Tarrant County.



Beverly Gaines, CMO

TAMCC President and TML Board Director and Mayor Pro Tem, City of Webster

Beverly Gaines has served the City of Webster since 1999 when she became a resident. Gaines and Ron, her husband of 50 years, moved to Webster from Sealy where she had been very active in local government as an election clerk and judge. Gaines served on city council from 2006 to 2012, then from 2015 to the present. She presides as mayor pro tem, just as she did in 2015.

Of great importance, Gaines is very active in the Texas Municipal League (TML) and Texas Association of Mayors, Council Members and Commissioners (TAMCC), a TML affiliate organization. Gaines serves as president of TML Region 14 and presides as vice president of TAMCC.

During Gaines' tenure on city council, she earned the prestigious Certified Municipal Official designation that connotes dedication to her office and city. Just as society and its challenges and opportunities evolve, so, too, do regulations, laws, and best practices for city officials. Continuing education prepares Gaines to serve her constituents, fellow council members, and staff in the best possible manner.

Gaines fuses her vocation as life and health insurance agent with public service. She serves on a number of boards and civic organizations, including the Webster Economic Development Corporation and the Webster Citizen Police Academy Alumni Association. Her service illuminates a wide range of interests, like the Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone, Zoning Board of Adjustments, Celebration Committee, Harris County Mayor and Council Association, Houston-Galveston Area Council, and ERCOT.

Gaines is dedicated to serving Webster with her commitment to maintain a high level of safety, City services, fiscal responsibility, and quality of life, together with a low property tax rate and pro-business mentality.